Integrity Journal of Arts and Humanities
Volume 7(3), pages 134-143, October 2026
Article Number: BA1B976B2
ISSN: 2811-2407
https://doi.org/10.31248/IJAH2026.261
https://integrityresjournals.org/journal/IJAH

Full Length Research

A study of Christian discipleship and the cost of following Christ in Luke 14:25–33 among members of Foursquare Gospel Church, Ikorodu 1 District, Lagos State

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Received Date: 08 September 2026 | Accepted Date: 06 October 2026 | Published Date: 30 October 2026

ABSTRACT: Christian discipleship is frequently understood as participation in church classes and programmes, yet the New Testament presents discipleship as a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ expressed through the imitation of his character and conduct. The study examined the biblical meaning and cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25–33, assessed members' understanding and practice of discipleship, identified factors affecting effective discipleship, and examined possible strategies for strengthening discipleship practice in FGC Ikorodu 1 District. The study employed biblical exegetical analysis of Luke 14:25–33 alongside a descriptive survey of members and leaders of FGC Ikorodu 1 District. A self-developed questionnaire was administered across the five zones of the district; 300 copies were distributed, and 283 valid responses were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The study found that respondents possessed substantial conceptual knowledge of discipleship: 99.6% agreed that discipleship entails total commitment and adherence to Jesus Christ, while 100% agreed that discipleship should be expressed through practical lifestyles and conduct rather than church programmes alone. The findings also showed that 77.1% agreed that one-on-one discipleship is practised in their churches, whereas 70.4% agreed that some members participate in discipleship classes primarily for membership and leadership purposes rather than to embody Christlike conduct. Furthermore, 47% indicated concerns about the exemplary practice of discipleship by leaders and teachers, and 61.0% agreed that some members are promoted without sufficient evidence of godly lifestyles. The study argues that the principal challenge is therefore not lack of awareness but the translation of discipleship knowledge into observable Christian practice. It recommends a deliberate shift from programme-centred discipleship toward relational, practical, and accountable formation in which leaders model the character of Christ.

Keywords: Christian discipleship, faith development, Foursquare Gospel Church, Luke 14:25–33, practical Christianity, spiritual formation.

INTRODUCTION

Discipleship is central to Christian identity and formation. Although the term may appear familiar in contemporary churches, its practical meaning is often more demanding than its routine use suggests. In the biblical world, a disciple was not merely a student who acquired information from a teacher; the disciple was one who attached himself or herself to a master, learned the master's teaching and way of life, and reproduced that learning in practice. Köstenberger (1998) observes that the ancient disciple was distinguished from the modern student by the depth of personal devotion involved in following a teacher. Similarly, Sri (2018) describes discipleship as deliberate apprenticeship in which the disciple becomes a living representation of the master.

Christian discipleship therefore involves more than doctrinal instruction or attendance at religious programmes. It is a continuing process of learning, imitation, submission, transformation, and replication. Jesus not only called individuals to follow him but also commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20). The command assumes that those who follow Christ will themselves become agents of spiritual formation. Discipleship is consequently both relational and practical: believers learn from Christ and demonstrate that learning through their conduct toward God, other people, possessions, responsibilities, and society. Although previous theological studies have examined the meaning, models, processes, the mission to establish discipleship, and Matthew theology, the cost of discipleship, limited empirical attention has been given to the relationship between members' conceptual understanding of discipleship and their observable practice within local Pentecostal congregations in Nigeria. This study addresses this gap by examining FGC Ikorodu 1 District through Luke 14:25–33 and a descriptive survey of its members and leaders.

The Gospel of Luke gives substantial attention to the nature and cost of following Jesus. Luke 14:25–33 is particularly important because Jesus turns to the crowds following him and distinguishes serious discipleship from casual association. The passage contains strong sayings about allegiance to Jesus, bearing one's cross, counting the cost, and renouncing possessions. Bock (1996) notes that the passage presents the requirements of genuine discipleship, while Garland (2011) identifies the unit as a teaching section in which Jesus explains both the cost and value of being his disciple. The language of the passage is deliberately demanding: discipleship requires a reordering of priorities so that loyalty to Christ takes precedence over every competing attachment.

Within contemporary Pentecostal and evangelical contexts, discipleship is expressed through a range of formal and relational practices, including Bible and discipleship classes, small-group or house-fellowship meetings, mentoring, leadership development, personal spiritual formation, and other congregational activities. Ibiyeomie (2022), in a study of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, found a positive relationship between mentoring practices and dimensions of relational church growth, including nurturing, proclaiming, and witnessing. Williamson and Handley (2024) argue that Pentecostal disciple-making should integrate the work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, spiritual formation, and communal transformation. These studies suggest that contemporary discipleship extends beyond the transmission of biblical information to include relational, communal, mentoring, and formative practices. Through the researcher's pastoral interaction with members and leaders of the churches, the researcher identified this challenge of discipleship being organized through Sunday School, Bible study, and small groups, but yet not demonstrating the formation of true disciples in FGC Ikorodu 1 District. The study therefore raises an important ecclesiological question: how can a church move from teaching about discipleship to producing disciples whose everyday lives visibly reflect the teachings of Christ?

The problem addressed by this study is the apparent gap between knowledge of discipleship and the practical embodiment of discipleship among some members of FGC Ikorodu 1 District. The study reports that members overwhelmingly recognised discipleship as total commitment to Jesus Christ and agreed that it should be demonstrated through patience, integrity, love, sacrifice, humility, submission, obedience, and related Christian virtues. Yet respondents also indicated that these qualities were not consistently practised by members. The problem is intensified when participation in discipleship classes becomes a means of obtaining church membership, advancement, or leadership appointment rather than a process of becoming increasingly conformed to Christ. The study therefore investigates Luke 14:25–33 as a biblical framework for evaluating the meaning, cost, models, challenges, and practical implications of discipleship in the selected church context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discipleship may be understood as the process by which a learner follows a master, receives instruction, imitates the master's way of life, and eventually reproduces that life and teaching in others. In Christian theology, the master is Jesus Christ. The concept therefore combines learning and living. Reid (1990) associates discipleship with the way individuals live out their understanding of what it means to be disciples, while Mattes (2012) emphasises the ethical and formative dimensions of discipleship. Faleye (2015) similarly presents discipleship as a lifelong process through which the learner submits to and learns from the teacher with the aim of becoming like the teacher.

Ancient Hebrew discipleship (Jewish rabbinical system)

According to Ortiz (2021), in the first-century Jewish rabbinical system, discipleship involved young men being selected and trained by rabbis to become future teachers. A disciple typically accompanied his rabbi for several years, learning his theology, teaching methods, philosophy, and way of life. The ultimate goal was to preserve and continue the rabbi's teachings and practices. Jacob et al. (2000) observe that the authenticity of Scripture was understood to require "proper training and acculturation," which was achieved through rabbinic discipleship. Thus, Hebrew discipleship emphasised close imitation, training, and continuity of the rabbi's tradition (Ortiz, 2021).

Ancient Greek discipleship

Ancient Greek discipleship, evident in the traditions of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, also involved the systematic training of students in a teacher's philosophy and way of life (Ortiz, 2021). Disciples were expected to learn, preserve, and propagate their teacher's ideas. The ancient Greek philosophers would similarly select young men and would train them to learn their philosophy and way of doing things. They would teach them to write and read material that was in line with that philosopher's way of thinking. If you were being trained or mentored by a particular Greek philosopher, you were expected to learn as much as you could to help give additional evidence to that philosopher's way of thinking or way of teaching. Everything you did was aimed at spreading the ideas of the person you were training under. The goal was not to be your own man but to understand your teacher's thought and seek to expand his ideology and philosophy.

According to Evans (2014), describing the Ancient Greek Discipleship notes that:

> The word disciple means learner, student, and the Greek had disciples in the realm of philosophy. Plato, often called the Father of philosophy, developed a system of thought that deal with issues of epistemology, and issues related to the meaning of life. Plato disciple his student Aristotle who took what he had learned and built gymnasiums or academies. In the ancient world, gymnasiums were not arenas for sporting events. They were training, discipling centers to teach students Plato's thought and the system developed by Aristotle, known as Aristotelian logic. The students thus trained were "gymnatized," which is the verb form of the Greek word for gymnasium. So successful was this discipling processes that it allowed the Greeks to influence the whole Greco-Roman world. This process was called Hellenization, in which people who were not Greek began to adopt Greek thinking, language, and culture. That was all part of this concept of discipleship. The New Testament picked up this concept and put it in a spiritual context so we would know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipleship involves an apprenticeship in which the apprentice, or student, is brought toward a particular goal (pp. 2-3).

Discipleship models

Discipleship models refer to the methods through which more experienced Christians help others grow in faith (Ortiz, 2021). Churches employ various approaches, including life-on-life, family, classroom, layered, and organic discipleship. The life-on-life model emphasizes relational formation through friendships, small groups, ministry teams, and interest groups. Small groups provide greater opportunity for participation, personal relationships, care, accountability, and active learning (Richards, 1975; Janvier, 1993). While Janvier (1993) emphasizes personalized discipleship and accountability, classroom-based approaches provide structured doctrinal instruction. However, these approaches should not necessarily be viewed as mutually exclusive. Ortiz (2021) argues for combining different models according to their respective strengths, since Jesus and Paul employed various approaches. The present study therefore examines whether the models practised in FGC Ikorodu 1 District facilitate movement from knowledge acquisition to observable Christian conduct. Janvier (1993, p. 88) concludes that "God has a variety of methods available." Ultimately, discipleship must not become merely an academic programme; it must develop into a continuous lifestyle of learning and Christlikeness. As Tasker (1961) states, "a disciple is not one who has already learned, but one who is always learning."

LUKE 14:25–33 AND THE DEMANDS OF DISCIPLESHIP: Greek translation of the text Luke 14:25-33

25 Συνεπορεύοντο δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί, καὶ στραφεὶς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς·
26 εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρός με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀδελφὰς ἔτι τε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἑαυτοῦ, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής.
27 ὅστις οὐ βαστάζει τὸν σταυρὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής.
28 Τίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν θέλων πύργον οἰκοδομῆσαι οὐχὶ πρῶτον καθίσας ψηφίζει τὴν δαπάνην, εἰ ἔχει εἰς ἀπαρτισμόν;
29 ἵνα μήποτε θέντος αὐτοῦ θεμέλιον καὶ μὴ ἰσχύοντος ἐκτελέσαι πάντες οἱ θεωροῦντες ἄρξωνται αὐτῷ ἐμπαίζειν
30 λέγοντες ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἤρξατο οἰκοδομεῖν καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἐκτελέσαι.
31 Ἢ τίς βασιλεὺς πορευόμενος ἑτέρῳ βασιλεῖ συμβαλεῖν εἰς πόλεμον οὐχὶ καθίσας πρῶτον βουλεύσεται εἰ δυνατός ἐστιν ἐν δέκα χιλιάσιν ὑπαντῆσαι τῷ μετὰ εἴκοσι χιλιάδων ἐρχομένῳ ἐπ' αὐτόν;
32 εἰ δὲ μή γε, ἔτι αὐτοῦ πόρρω ὄντος πρεσβείαν ἀποστείλας ἐρωτᾷ τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην.
33 οὕτως οὖν πᾶς ἐξ ὑμῶν ὃς οὐκ ἀποτάσσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής.

Luke 14:25–33 occurs within the larger travel narrative in which Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem and instructs his followers about the nature of the kingdom and the demands

of following him. The immediate context is significant. After the parable of the great banquet (14:15–24), in which a wide invitation is extended, Jesus turns to the crowds and explains that entrance into the kingdom and participation in his mission must not be confused with superficial association. Jesus addresses the large crowd and challenges the assumption that physical proximity to him is equivalent to discipleship. Garland (2011) observes that the passage moves from the invitation to the banquet toward a clarification of the cost of discipleship.

The first demand is supreme allegiance to Jesus (Luke 14:25–26). The second is cross-bearing (v. 27). The third is deliberate calculation of the cost (vv. 28–32). The final demand is renunciation of possessions (v. 33). Taken together, these elements demonstrate that discipleship is not simply attendance, information, or institutional affiliation. It is a whole-life response to Jesus. Jesus presents discipleship as a serious call to allegiance rather than a casual decision. The expressions “comes to me” and “comes after me” emphasise both entering into a relationship with Jesus and continuing to follow Him. Marshall (1978) and Bock (1996) both recognise the section's emphasis on the absolute nature of commitment. The disciple must consciously decide that Jesus has first claim over family, self, ambitions, resources, and future.

The opening demand concerns priority of allegiance. Jesus' statement that a disciple must hate “*μισεῖ*” father, mother, spouse, children, siblings, and even one's own life should be understood in its Semitic idiomatic context as a demand to love Christ above every other legitimate attachment. The parallel saying in Matthew 10:37 clarifies this priority by speaking of loving Jesus more than family. Bock (1996, p. 542) identifies two central demands: “Hating the family” and “Bearing one’s cross.” While “hate” does not mean literal hostility, it denotes loving Jesus above every other relationship, "to hate" means "to love (one's family) less". (Stein, 1992, p. 397; Bock, 1996, p. 543). This Semitic expression of preference is consistent with Jesus’ command to love even one’s enemies (Luke 6:27) and demonstrates that family must never take precedence over allegiance to Christ (Garland, 2011, p. 2090). The issue is therefore not hostility toward family but undivided allegiance to Christ (Bock, 1996; Garland, 2011).

Luke 14:27 adds the demand to bear one's cross. Discipleship involves willingness to accept the cost of following Jesus rather than pursuing a convenient religious identity. Jesus’ statement, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27), presents discipleship as an ongoing willingness to endure rejection, suffering, and self-sacrifice (Stein, 1992, p. 397; Garland, 2011, pp. 2092–93). The present tense of *bastazō* suggests a continuing process rather than a one-time act (Garland, 2011, p. 2064). The two illustrations that follow, the builder calculating the cost of a tower and the king considering war, reinforce the necessity of deliberate commitment. A person should not begin discipleship casually or without understanding its demands. Verse 33 brings the teaching to a practical conclusion by insisting that disciples must renounce their possessions. This does not mean that Christian discipleship requires every believer to possess nothing; rather, possessions cannot occupy a position that competes with Christ's lordship. The passage consequently presents discipleship as a comprehensive reordering of life.

This framework also clarifies the difference between discipleship as a programme and discipleship as a way of life. Church classes can communicate knowledge, but the teaching of Luke 14 requires that knowledge to produce costly allegiance and transformed practice. This observation is consistent with the original study's conceptual conclusion that discipleship should be evidenced by patience, integrity, love, commitment to God, sacrifice, humility, submission, and obedience. The practical test of discipleship is therefore not simply whether members can define it, but whether their lives increasingly reflect the character and priorities of Christ.

Theoretical framework

The principal theological framework of this study is the teaching of Jesus on the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25–33**.** The passage presents discipleship as a radical and total commitment to Christ, expressed in self-denial, willingness to bear the cost of following Him, and the reordering of personal relationships and possessions under the lordship of Christ. Thus, the study understands discipleship not merely as participation in a church programme or acquisition of biblical knowledge, but as a transformative way of life demonstrated through commitment, obedience, sacrifice, and practical Christian conduct.

Within this framework, Fowler’s Faith Development Theory serves as a complementary theoretical lens. Fowler (1981) presents faith as a developmental process through which persons construct and reconstruct meaning, commitment, and identity. The theory identifies stages of faith development, ranging from an early undifferentiated faith through increasingly reflective and integrated forms of faith. The study particularly connected discipleship with Fowler's individuative-reflective stage, in which individuals assume greater personal responsibility for their faith rather than merely conforming to the expectations of a community.

The relevance of Fowler's theory to discipleship lies in its emphasis on growth rather than mere religious affiliation. Grover (1999) argues that faith development theory can serve the church by helping leaders understand discipleship as an ongoing process and by encouraging structures appropriate to different stages of spiritual

growth. The theory also cautions against treating faith development as rigid or identical for every person. In the context of this study, Fowler's framework is useful because the empirical problem is not principally the absence of religious information. Rather, the challenge is movement from conceptual agreement to personal responsibility, mature commitment, and observable conduct. Discipleship, therefore, should be evaluated as a process of formation in which Christian beliefs progressively become Christian practices.

The relationship between the two frameworks is therefore complementary. Luke 14:25–33 provides the theological framework for defining the demands of discipleship, while Fowler's faith development theory provides a developmental perspective for understanding how believers may progress from externally mediated religious participation toward personal responsibility and mature faith. The theological framework answers the question: What does Jesus require of those who would follow Him? Fowler's theory helps illuminate the question: How can faith develop toward greater maturity and commitment?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study employed a descriptive survey design complemented by exegetical and historical-analytical examination of Luke 14:25–33.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised members and leaders of Foursquare Gospel Church Ikorodu 1 District, Ikorodu, Lagos State. At the time of the study, the district had approximately 1,699 registered members and 2,836 average worshippers distributed across 43 accredited local churches and five zones. The Zones are as follows: Ikorodu, Odogunyan, Agbala Jesu, Solomade, and 4Estate. The study therefore focused on congregants and church leaders within these five zones.

Sample and sampling technique

The study employed the simple random sampling technique in this study. A total of 67 Pastors, 97 unit heads, 63 Sunday School teachers, and 56 members were selected from various Local churches across the five Zones. The selected individuals include Pastors in Charge, leaders of units, workers, and members who were informed about the topic at hand. The number of local churches influenced the method of distribution of the questionnaire. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed across the five zones of Foursquare Gospel Church Ikorodu 1 District. Of these, 283 were returned and found usable for analysis, representing a response rate of 94.3%. The analysis was therefore based on 283 valid responses: $(283 \div 300) \times 100 = 94.3\%$.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the collection of data is a self-developed research questionnaire. To validate the instrument, the questions were constructed in simple and clear language, ambiguities were avoided for the sake of misunderstanding. The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by a professor in Religious Studies, who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. The assessment, observations, and suggestions of the supervisor were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A and Section B. Section A elicits some personal information and biographical details from the respondents, while Section B consists of questions that bear directly on the topic and subject of discussion. Section B contains four options, one of which will be ticked by the respondents against the research statement. The options of the respondents are analysed using a Likert scale, which includes: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D).

Method of data collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires. Permission was obtained from the District Overseer, Zonal Superintendents, and pastors of the selected local churches. The questionnaires were administered during Sunday services to eligible church members, pastors, unit leaders, workers, and Sunday School teachers. The researcher explained the purpose and relevance of the study to the respondents and provided appropriate guidance on completing the instrument.

Procedure for data analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts and percentages. The responses to each questionnaire item were summarised according to the number and percentage of respondents selecting each response option. The findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the biblical framework of discipleship in Luke 14:25–33. No inferential statistical claims were made because the study

was designed primarily as a descriptive survey.

Responses generated from the respondents were analysed to provide answers to the research questions formulated for this study. The formula adopted in analysing the data is: Percentage (%) = (Number of responses / Total number of respondents) × 100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal data of the respondents

The instrument (questionnaire) was administered and retrieved from respondents of the Foursquare Gospel Church, Ikorodu 1 District, Ikorodu, Lagos State. The number of instruments retrieved and found usable was 283. Below is the summary of the composition of responses by gender, educational qualification, and status in the church.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender. It shows that one hundred and twenty-five (125) respondents, representing 44.2% of the sample population, were male, while one hundred and fifty-eight (158) respondents, representing 55.8% of the population, were female. Table 1 also shows that the majority of the respondents were females (55.8%), and 44.2% were males, with a difference of 33 (11.6%) between the two genders. The study did not investigate the reasons for this gender distinction.

Table 1 shows that twenty-six (26) respondents representing 9.2% of the sample were Primary school holders, fifty-two (52) respondents representing 18.4% were Secondary school certificate holders; thirty-four (34) respondents representing 12.0% were holders of NCE/OND certificates. Also, one hundred and five (105) respondents representing 37.1% were HND/Degree certificate holders, while sixty-six (66) respondents representing 23.3% of the population were postgraduate holders. The educational distribution indicates that 72.4% of respondents possessed at least an NCE/OND qualification. This suggests that a substantial proportion of respondents had post-secondary educational experience.

Table 1 shows the status of respondents in their various churches. Sixty-seven (67) respondents, representing 23.7% of the population, are pastors. Ninety-seven (97) respondents, representing 34.3% of the population, were unit head/leader; sixty-three (63) respondents, representing 22.3%, were Sunday School teachers; while fifty-six (56) respondents, representing 19.8%, were members. Therefore, the information contained in Table 1 reveals that the unit head/leaders (34.3%) are the highest, followed by the pastors (23.7%), and the members (19.8%) are the lowest. The relatively high representation of pastors, unit leaders, and Sunday School teachers provides perspectives from respondents who occupy different leadership, teaching and service roles within the church.

Understanding of discipleship

The first major finding is that respondents demonstrated a strong conceptual understanding of discipleship. A total of 99.6% (Table 2) agreed that discipleship is total commitment and adherence to Jesus Christ above every other person or thing, accompanied by godly lifestyles and conduct (Table 2). The finding indicates that the basic theological concept of discipleship is widely recognised within the study population. It also corresponds with the central demand of Luke 14:25–33, where Jesus places allegiance to himself above competing claims.

Equally significant, 100% (Table 2) of respondents agreed that discipleship should be expressed as a practical lifestyle, including patience, integrity, commitment, and love, rather than being restricted to Sunday School classes and church programmes (Table 2). This finding is consistent with the understanding of discipleship in previous studies. Sri (2018) defines discipleship as a deliberate process of apprenticeship through which the disciple is shaped into a living representation of the master, while Evans (2014) similarly describes discipleship as an apprenticeship directed toward a particular goal. Reid (1990) places particular emphasis on the lived dimension of discipleship, describing it in terms of how individuals or communities embody their understanding of what it means to be a disciple. Faleye (2015) likewise understands discipleship as a process in which a learner submits to a teacher with the aim of becoming like the teacher. It also suggests that the problem in FGC Ikorodu 1 is not adequately explained by conceptual ignorance. Members know what discipleship ought to be. The findings suggest that respondents possess substantial conceptual understanding of discipleship, while their responses indicate that this understanding may not consistently translate into practical Christian conduct. The distinction between knowledge and practice is therefore important in interpreting the findings.

The finding also exposes a distinction between religious participation and spiritual formation. Attendance at classes and services can provide learning opportunities, but attendance alone does not demonstrate that the learner has internalised the master's way of life. This distinction is particularly important for contemporary churches because programmes can become ends in themselves. A discipleship class may successfully transfer information while failing to create relationships in which conduct is observed, corrected, modelled, and reproduced.

For FGC Ikorodu 1, however, the significance of this finding lies not merely in the high level of conceptual agreement but in whether such understanding is translated into conduct. The strong conceptual consensus provides a favourable foundation for discipleship ministry, but it should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that members consistently practice what they affirm. The

subsequent findings are therefore particularly important because they reveal a tension between respondents' understanding of discipleship and their perception of its practical expression.

Models and practice of discipleship

One-on-one discipleship received strong support. The findings show that 77.1% (Table 3) of respondents agreed that one-on-one discipleship is practised in their church, while 94.7% (Table 3) agreed that it is one of the best models and media of discipleship. These findings suggest strong acceptance of relational discipleship within FGC Ikorodu 1. These findings correspond closely with Janvier (1993), whose work presents one-on-one discipleship as an effective medium because it allows the needs of individual disciples to be addressed more directly. Its strength lies in personalised teaching, observation, accountability, correction, and encouragement (Table 3). Other models, including age-group, family, and large-group discipleship, were also practised, as reported by 86.6% of respondents. These models can complement one another by providing biblical knowledge, fellowship, imitation, and accountability. The effectiveness of discipleship therefore depends not on one model alone but on its ability to promote meaningful transformation. The finding should not be interpreted as demonstrating that one-on-one discipleship is universally superior to all other forms. The fact that 86.6% also acknowledged age-group, family, and large-group models indicates that different approaches coexist within FGC Ikorodu 1. The most appropriate implication is therefore complementarity rather than exclusivity: large-group teaching can provide common theological instruction, while smaller and individual relationships can facilitate personal application and accountability. The study also emphasised the importance of qualified and spiritually mature teachers, with 98.9% of respondents supporting their involvement (Table 3). Discipleship leaders must therefore demonstrate Christian character, since their lives should reflect the teachings they impart.

The implication for FGC Ikorodu 1 is that the existing practice of one-on-one discipleship represents an important strength that can be developed further. Rather than treating it merely as an additional programme, the church can intentionally use relational discipleship to bridge the gap identified between knowing the requirements of discipleship and embodying them. Mentors can help disciples apply biblical teaching to concrete issues such as integrity, relationships, stewardship, conflict, work, family responsibilities, and Christian witness.

Factors affecting effective discipleship

The study identifies a significant gap between the ideals taught in discipleship and their practical expression. Only 38.1% (Table 4) agreed that discipleship practices and lifestyles such as patience, love, commitment to God, integrity, sacrifice, humility, submission, and obedience were inadequately taught, whereas 61.9% disagreed. Thus, the majority did not perceive inadequate teaching itself as the principal problem (Table 4). This indicates that the major challenge is not the absence of teaching but the inconsistent translation of teaching into godly lifestyles. Leadership modelling is also a concern, with 47% affirming that leaders do not sufficiently exemplify what they teach, suggesting that inconsistent role-modelling may weaken discipleship effectiveness.

Motivation presents another challenge, as 70.4% (Table 4) agreed that some participants attend discipleship classes primarily to qualify for membership or leadership rather than to develop Christlike character. Additionally, 61.0% (Table 4) reported that some individuals progress through discipleship classes without sufficient evidence of godly lifestyles. Language was a less widespread concern, with 39.2% identifying it as a challenge (Table 4). This finding is particularly important when compared with Reid's (1990) understanding of discipleship as the way individuals and groups live out their understanding of what it means to be disciples. It also corresponds with Sri's (2018) apprenticeship model, in which the goal of discipleship is not merely knowledge but conformity to the character and pattern of the master. The present study therefore does not challenge these previous understandings; rather, it reveals a practical difficulty in translating the ideal of discipleship into congregational life. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents perceive character formation, leadership modelling, genuine motivation, and observable Christian practice as important areas for strengthening discipleship.

For FGC Ikorodu 1, this means that completion of a discipleship course should not be regarded as the sole indicator of discipleship maturity. Teaching should be accompanied by mentoring, observation, accountability, practical assignments, and opportunities for members to demonstrate Christian character in family, workplace, relationships, church service, and wider society. In this sense, the principal challenge identified by the study may be less a complete absence of discipleship teaching than the difficulty of translating teaching into sustained Christian practice.

Solutions to effective discipleship in Foursquare Gospel Church, Ikorodu 1 District, Ikorodu

The findings indicate strong support for strengthening the teaching and practice of Christian discipleship. A total of 96.2% of respondents agreed that discipleship teachings should adequately emphasise godly lifestyles and conduct rather than undue acquisition and possession of wealth. Similarly, 96.4% supported allocating more time to disciple-

ship classes to ensure adequate teaching of Christian lifestyles and conduct (Table 5). The findings further show that 98.6% agreed that only competent and exemplary leaders or teachers should facilitate discipleship classes. In addition, 98.6% supported emphasising and requiring exemplary, practical discipleship lifestyles before promoting members from one Sunday School class to another. Overall, the responses demonstrate a strong preference for a discipleship system that prioritises godly character, practical Christian living, adequate teaching, and exemplary leadership**,** rather than merely completing classes or advancing through programmes.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study have implications for Christian theology, ecclesiology, church leadership, and discipleship education. Rather than simply restating the empirical results, these implications identify how the findings should inform the understanding and practice of discipleship within Foursquare Gospel Church Ikorodu 1 District.

Theological Implication

The primary theological implication is that Luke 14:25–33 presents discipleship as comprehensive allegiance to Jesus Christ rather than mere participation in a religious programme. Jesus' teaching emphasises the reordering of personal priorities, self-denial, willingness to bear the cross, and deliberate counting of the cost of following him. The strong agreement among respondents that discipleship involves total commitment to Christ and a practical Christian lifestyle is therefore consistent with the theological orientation of the Lukan text.

The implication is that Christian discipleship should be evaluated not only in terms of what believers know about Jesus but also in terms of the extent to which their lives reflect their allegiance to him. Discipleship consequently involves an integrated response encompassing belief, character, relationships, conduct, service, and daily decision-making. For the church, this provides a theological basis for moving discipleship beyond the transmission of biblical information toward formation in the likeness of Christ.

Ecclesiological implication

The findings have a significant implication for how the church understands membership, discipleship, and spiritual formation. Since respondents strongly affirmed that discipleship should be expressed through practical Christian conduct, completion of a discipleship class should not be treated as the sole indicator of spiritual formation. A person may complete a course of instruction and demonstrate adequate knowledge of its content without necessarily demonstrating corresponding growth in Christian character. The findings therefore suggest that FGC Ikorodu 1 should regard discipleship as a continuing process of formation rather than a programme that ends when a particular class or course is completed. Progression within the church should increasingly be associated with evidence of spiritual maturity, Christian character, service, and faithful participation in the life of the Christian community.

This does not imply abandoning formal discipleship classes. Rather, formal instruction should function as one component of a broader discipleship process that continues through relationships, service, mentoring, accountability, and practical Christian living.

Leadership implication

The findings also have direct implications for church leadership. Since 98.9% of respondents agreed that discipleship lessons should be facilitated by pastors or spiritually mature Christians, discipleship teachers occupy an important formative position within the church. The teacher is therefore not merely a transmitter of information but also a potential model for imitation.

The implication is that leaders and teachers should demonstrate the conduct they teach**.** Qualities such as integrity, patience, humility, love, obedience, sacrifice, submission, and commitment to God should be evident in the lives of those entrusted with discipleship ministry. This is particularly important in a relational model of discipleship, where disciples can observe the character and practices of those who guide them.

Consequently, FGC Ikorodu 1 should give attention to both the competence and character of those appointed to teach or facilitate discipleship. Leadership development should include not only theological and instructional competence but also continuing spiritual formation and accountability.

Educational implication

The findings suggest that discipleship education should move beyond the exclusive transmission of information toward formative and participatory learning. The apparent gap between respondents' understanding of discipleship and their perception of its practical expression indicates that knowledge alone may not be sufficient to produce sustained Christian conduct.

Discipleship programmes should therefore incorporate mentoring, reflection, accountability, discussion, and practical application**.** Learners should have opportunities to consider how biblical principles apply to relationships,

family responsibilities, work, finances, conflict, integrity, service, evangelism, and other dimensions of everyday life. One-on-one discipleship is particularly relevant in this regard because it can provide a context for personal guidance, observation, encouragement, correction, and accountability.

The educational implication is consequently not simply that more discipleship lessons are required, but that the pedagogy of discipleship should intentionally connect biblical knowledge with Christian practice**.**

Conclusion

This study concludes that Christian discipleship, as interpreted through Luke 14:25–33, involves comprehensive allegiance to Christ, self-denial, sacrifice, obedience, and the practical expression of Christian character. The findings indicate that respondents possessed substantial conceptual understanding of discipleship. Specifically, 99.6% of respondents agreed that discipleship involves total commitment and adherence to Jesus Christ, while 100% agreed that discipleship should be expressed as a practical Christian lifestyle characterised by virtues such as patience, integrity, commitment, and love. These findings are consistent with the study's biblical interpretation of discipleship as more than intellectual knowledge or participation in church programmes.

At the same time, the empirical findings point to a perceived gap between understanding discipleship and consistently expressing it in Christian conduct. Although 77.1% of respondents reported that one-on-one discipleship was practised in their churches and 94.7% identified it as one of the best models and media of discipleship, other findings indicate concerns about the practical outcomes of discipleship formation. For example, 61.2% disagreed that the virtues taught in discipleship were practised by most members, while 61.0% agreed that some individuals were promoted or graduated in discipleship without sufficient evidence of godly lifestyles. In addition, 70.4% agreed that some members participated in discipleship classes primarily to become members or qualify for leadership positions rather than to practise discipleship as a way of life.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the principal challenge is not necessarily a lack of conceptual teaching about discipleship. Rather, the study points to the need for greater emphasis on translating discipleship teaching into sustained Christian conduct. The findings also underscore the importance of relational accountability, practical application, mentoring, and credible leadership modelling within Foursquare Gospel Church Ikorodu 1 District. Since the study relied on respondents' perceptions and self-reported assessments, these findings should not be interpreted as direct observational measurements of members' behaviour.

The study therefore concludes that effective discipleship within FGC Ikorodu 1 District should be understood and practised as an ongoing process of formation in which knowledge of Christ is progressively expressed through character, obedience, sacrifice, service, and everyday Christian conduct. In keeping with Luke 14:25–33, discipleship should not be reduced to completion of lessons or attainment of church positions but should foster a sustained and observable commitment to following Christ.

Recommendations

1. District leadership should strengthen relational and one-on-one discipleship alongside appropriate group-based models.
2. Discipleship teachers and leaders should be selected based on both teaching competence and demonstrable Christian character.
3. Progression through discipleship classes and leadership appointment should incorporate evidence of practical Christian conduct.
4. Discipleship sessions should allocate more time to mentoring, discussion, accountability, and practical application.
5. Discipleship materials should be adapted to the linguistic and educational needs of local congregations.

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